

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 CAIRO 09738 101236Z
ACTION SS-25

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S E C R E T CAIRO 9738

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MARR
SUBJECT: PROPOSED SALE OF F-5S TO SUDAN

REF: STATE 132906

1. QUESTION POSED REFTEL IS NOT EASILY ANSWERED.
AS DEPT POINTS OUT, IT HAS POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE ASPECTS.

2. ON POSITIVE SIDE, MOST IMPORTANT POINT WE COULD MAKE
IS THAT IT IS CONSISTENT WITH SADAT'S VIEW THAT MODERATE
AFRICAN STATES, AND ESPECIALLY THE SUDAN, BE HELPED TO
WITHSTAND POTENTIAL MILITARY THREATS AGAINST THEM.
WE COULD NOTE THAT SUCH SALE IS COMPLEMENTARY
TO JOINT EGYPTIAN-SUDANESE MILITARY PLANNING FOR DEFENSE
OF SUDAN.

3. WHILE WE COULD ALLOW SADAT TO TAKE SOME OF THE CREDIT
FOR URGING US TO APPROVE THE SALE, AND THIS MAY HAVE SOME
VALUE WITH NUMEIRI, IT WILL HAVE NO IMPACT HERE. SITUATION
IS NOT ANALAGOUS TO C-130'S, WHICH EGYPT HAS. HERE IT WILL
LOOK HOLLOW FOR SADAT TO CLAIM CREDIT FOR PROMOTING
F-5 SALES TO SUDAN WHEN HE HAS BEEN TOTALLY UNABLE
TO PERSUADE USG SELL SUCH AIRCRAFT TO EGYPT. HE MIGHT,
OF COURSE, SEEK TO ASSUAGE INEVITABLE RESENTMENT ON

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PART EGYPTIAN MILITARY BY PORTRAYING SUCH SALE AS
DIRECTLY SUPPORTIVE OF CURRENT JOINT EGYPTIAN-SUDANESE
DEFENSE PLANNING AND BY HINTING TO HIS OWN PEOPLE THAT,
IN THE EVENT OF RENEWED ARAB/ISRAELI HOSTILITIES, THESE
AIRCRAFT WOULD BECOME AVAILABLE TO PARTICIPATE IN ARAB
BATTLE.

4. ON NEGATIVE SIDE, THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT INVIDIOUS COMPARISONS WILL BE DRAWN. THIS WILL BE TRUE IN THE MILITARY IN GENERAL, BUT ESPECIALLY IN THE EGYPTIAN AIR FORCE. OUR AID PROGRAM IS NOT WIDELY KNOWN IN THE MILITARY, BUT SADAT'S LONG-DANGLED PROMISE THAT US ARMS WOULD BE FORTHCOMING IS. SO IS THE FACT THAT SUCH US ARMS HAVE NEVER MATERIALIZED. EGYPTIAN MILITARY WILL UNDOUBTEDLY ASK WHY, IF SADAT HAS SHIFTED TO THE UNITED STATES AS HE HAS, EGYPT IS STILL NOT RECEIVING F-5S WHEN US IS SELLING THEM TO THE SUDAN. THEY WILL NOTE, TOO, THAT NUMEIRI GOVT IS A WEAK GOVT AND NO ONE KNOWS HOW LONG IT WILL STAND. PARADOXICALLY, WHILE GOE AND THE EGYPTIAN MILITARY WOULD WELCOME ALMOST ANY MILITARY HARDWARE THAT WE MIGHT BE ABLE TO SUPPLY TO NUMEIRI, THE ONE EXCEPTION IS F-5S. IT IS NOT THAT THEY DO NOT WANT SUDAN TO HAVE F-5S, BUT EGYPTIAN MILITARY WILL RESENT BEING PLACED ON A LOWER LEVEL THAN THE SUDAN. SADAT WILL CERTAINLY LOSE SOME "FACE" WITH EGYPTIAN MILITARY, UPON WHOM HIS REGIME IN FINAL ANALYSIS MUST DEPEND.

5. THUS, SHOULD WE DECIDE TO SELL F-5S TO SUDAN, WE SHOULD EXPECT DISAPPOINTMENT ON SADAT'S PART THAT HE IS NOT GETTING THEM (A VISIBLE SYMBOL OF HIS LACK OF SUCCESS IN DEALING WITH US), CONSIDERABLE RESENTMENT ON THE PART OF FAHMY, GAMASY AND MILITARY OFFICERS, AND INTENSIFIED GOE PRESSURES ON US THAT EGYPT SHOULD BE TREATED IN THE SAME WAY. FAHMY WILL BITTERLY POINT OUT THAT AFTER ALL OF OUR CRITICISM OF NUMEIRI'S SHABBY HANDLING OF THE KHARTOUM EIGHT MURDERERS, WE NOW PROVIDE
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THE SUDAN WITH F-5S. AT THE SAME TIME, SADAT, WHO HAS JAILED THE KHARTOUM MURDERERS AND IS KEEPING THEM INCARCERATED DESPITE PLO AND SUDANESE PRESSURES, CONTINUES TO BE DENIED SUCH AIRCRAFT.

6. ABOVE ESTIMATE IS NOT INTENDED TO ARGUE AGAINST SALE OF F-5S TO SUDAN IF WE DECIDE OUR INTERESTS ARE SERVED BY DOING SO. WE SHOULD BE AWARE, HOWEVER, THAT SUCH A SALE WILL ON BALANCE HAVE ADVERSE IMPACT HERE IN THE ABSENCE OF ANY CORRESPONDING WILLINGNESS ON OUR PART TO MAKE F-5S AVAILABLE TO EGYPT. HOWEVER, THIS IS NOT AN UNMANAGEABLE PROBLEM.
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